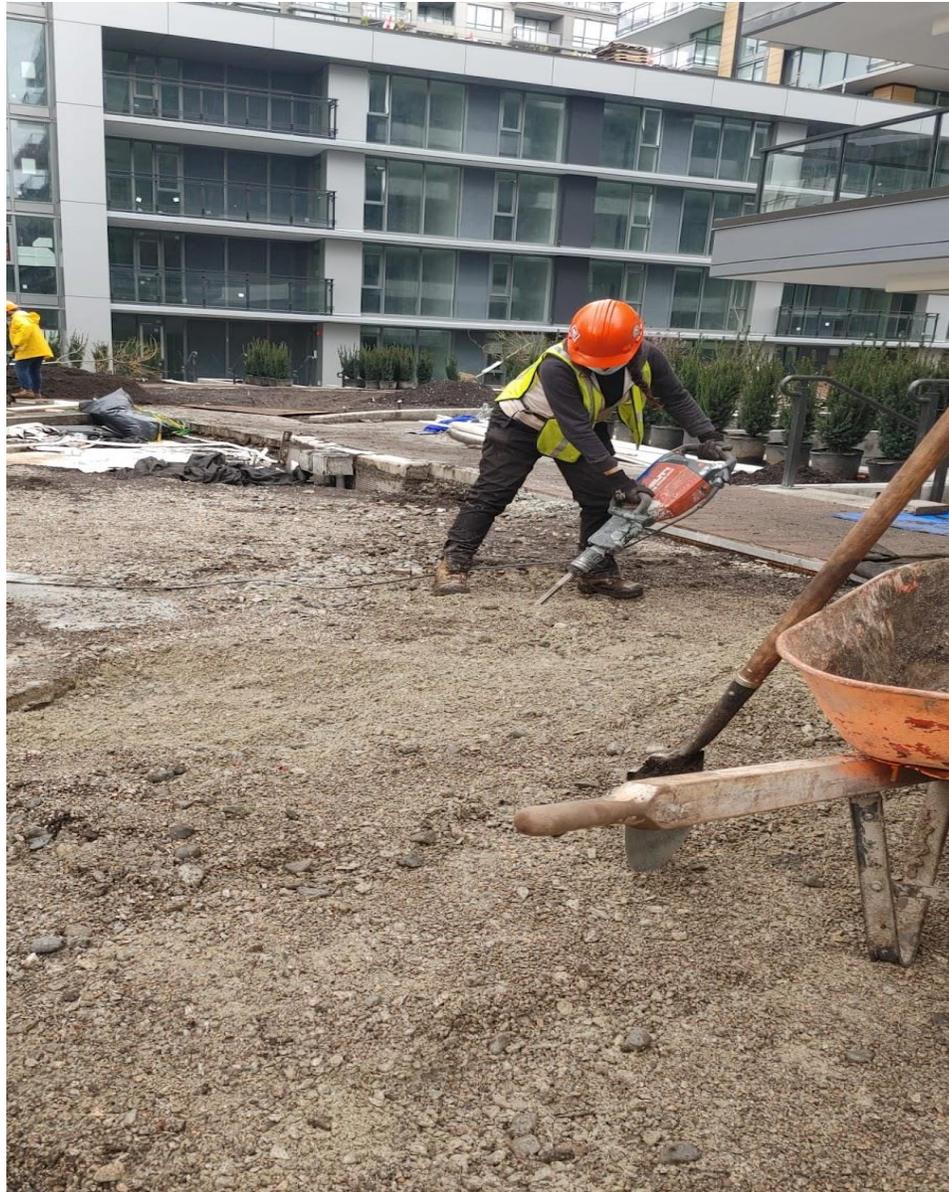




I did manage to get into the [hairdressing] program...I do want to do something with my life, and I think the school gave me a big opportunity. Even the teachers are helping me with my grades and staying after school sometimes...that means a lot to me...it's a blessing to be able to join it.



One of the benefits that Canada has given me is to have an employment that back home is [only] assigned to males. This experience has helped me to break stigma and stereotypes for people that work in certain industries such as construction.



I want to show the flag of Albania. Because this is love...always has been for Albanians. It's very dear to me, many generations of people give their life to protect this...very dear for others who die for this flag. We always have two flags in our home. To me the Canadian flag is a symbol of hope, a peace symbol. In our hardest days [Canada] took us in and gave us a chance for new life. So, to me, more to my heart, when I see the Canadian flag, it feels like I belong. It's my flag.



*This is a scarf or sari...this is a traditional cloth.
When I wear it and I'm in the Somali
community, I feel belonging, I'm proud of it. But
[sometimes] when I'm outside the house in
Canada, I feel exclusion because I feel different,
or I wear different [clothes] when I see other
people wearing pants.*



My mom is everything in my life. I'm so thankful for her and I wish I will be with her all the time and help her with everything in her life because she went through a lot. She helped us - we're seven children and she raised us so that we love everyone, help everyone. It's her, she did everything for us.



I work in Starbucks...in this place I feel so much belonging...they can serve you in French, Punjabi, English and all the languages which are on the board...it doesn't matter.



I feel this flag means belonging to me. ... English is really hard and difficult. It was [my] third language. To reach my goal, to reach this flag, to get to be a citizen was not easy. I feel proud. Because I tried to catch this flag. It was a long way, a long journey.



I feel like I can do my daily activities as a Canadian. I'm not scared. I thought I would be stuck and cannot live in cold or ice. When I see that there is snow outside, I say, "how I can go outside"? [But now] I feel free when I go outside, and I can go anywhere.



This was the time when I was a volunteer. I felt so happy and was so happy with the weather and everything. One of the things that made me more feel more included and that I belong to Canada was the seasons. You know, I never saw snow before. So, it's a big thing for me...just enjoying snow.



When I see this sky, I feel that I belong to the universe, no matter where I am. So, looking at it, I feel God's power. I am a religious person, so I feel God's power and feel I am in the hand of the creator. So, the beauty of the sky and the magnificent motivates me, and I feel connection somehow.



Nowadays, I am just learning how to grow plants from cuttings. I just cut those little branches out of the big bushes or big kinds of flowers or whatever.

So, this picture reminds me of Canada. We all are from other backgrounds, other cultures...but we all just gather on to the one place and try to grow all together even though we have different

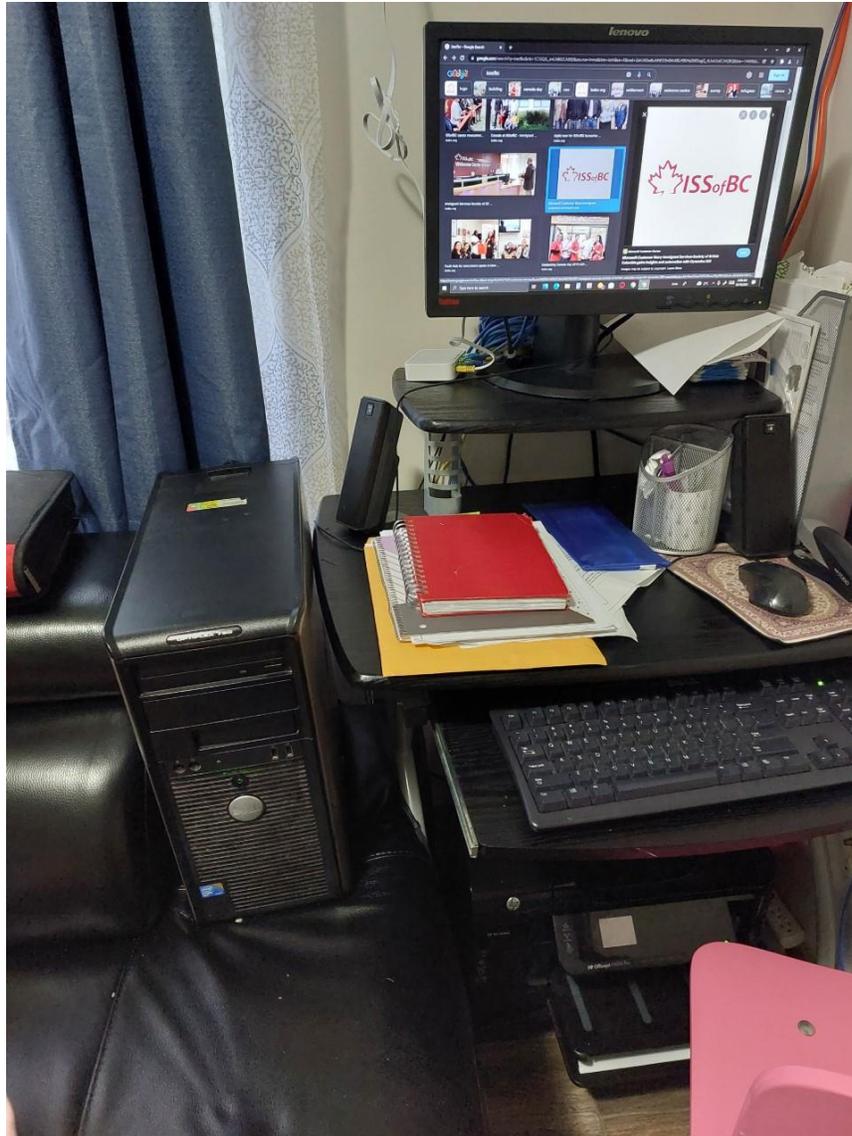
appearances, different kinds of characters, but still, we just live together in this territory. So, I just feel

belonging when I feel like I am here with other people just growing together with us sharing our

lives altogether.



I'm new here. So, this is the first time I see [a rainbow] so clear. I don't know if I belong to here or not yet...I'm still new and I don't have a friend, I don't have anyone yet. So that [rainbow] reminds me of when I'm with my friends in [my home country].



I feel very connected when I work. I'm very proud to be telling them I'm Canadian or I've been there, experienced what they're going through [as they] start over in Canada. But my work started in Canada as an immigrant that changed my viewpoint to being a Miracle Worker, myself. I'm very passionate about [working with] newcomers, especially women who is in high need.



I feel belonging [with] the fireplace, being with other people. I have a big family. That is why we need some time to get together.



It's like a family [there]. I love it, that table. It's any table, it's just the people around the table...right now, the table's my family.



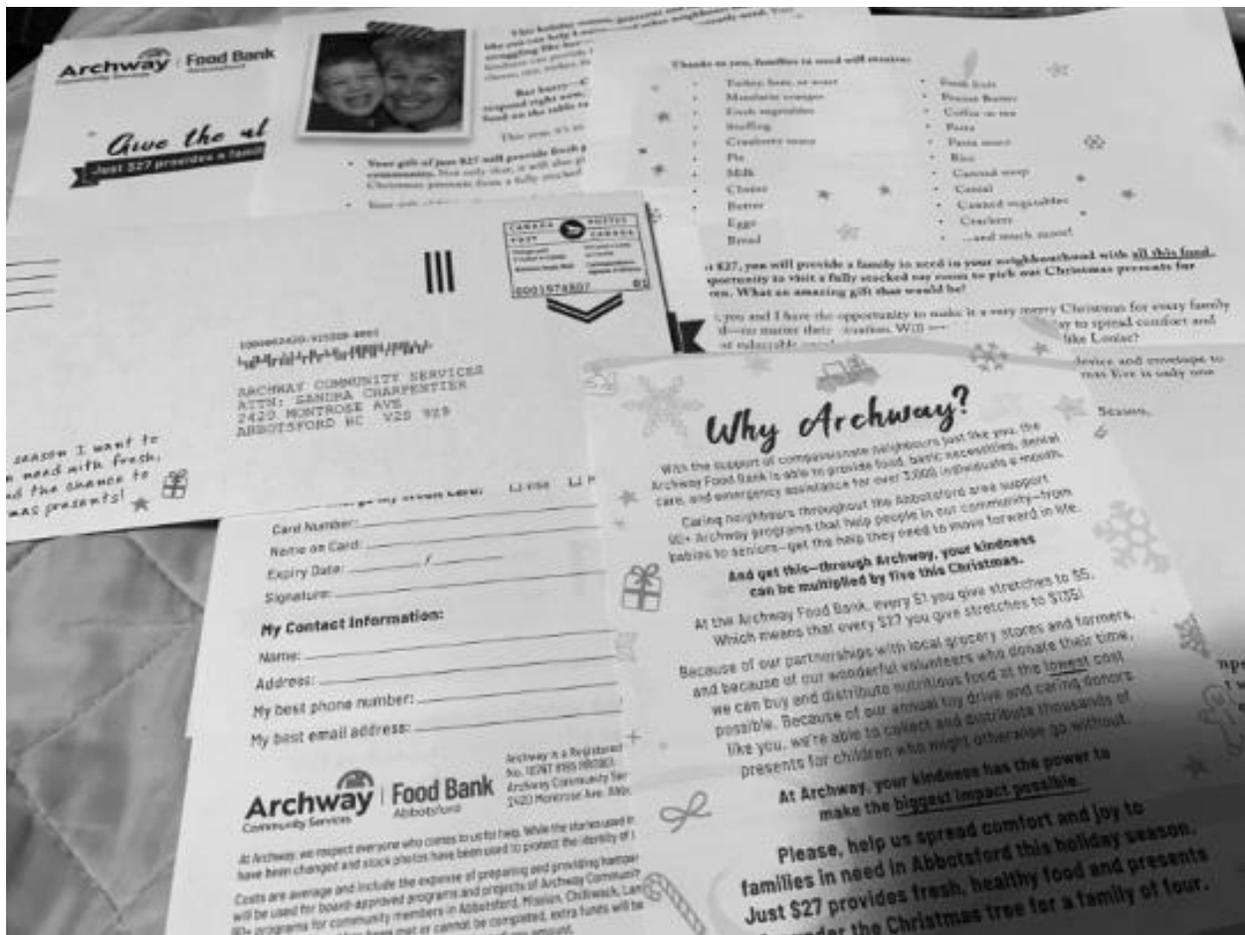
Regarding belonging, I will say my family is the strongest...they are a symbol to represent belonging. Before, I couldn't have my mom's cooking every day, but only after they permanently landed, I had my routine resumed. When my parents came to Canada, it helped for sure. Before, [in her home country] they guided me more but now that they've landed, I'm kind of like a teacher telling [them] about this and that...so it's a little bit of a role reversal [in Canada].



I can safely walk just to clear my head and to have some physical exercise, which I was deprived of [in her home country]. Because in [home country] it is definitely not safe for women. So here I feel really belong. My husband doesn't worry about me and where I'm going. And I just say, "Ok, I am going out"!



As a refugee from [home country] and as a woman I was not safe there. Particularly women who went to school or work and university faced a lot of harassment I never had a chance to even go to a walk without getting harassment without being judged or without the men telling me something...as a woman, I didn't have safety and security. I didn't feel belonging. That is why I left my country.



So, you build connections, you build trust, and they make you feel like home [in a community agency].

They made sure if you need something, even without status, such as food, clothing, they still offer it to you, regardless. No matter if you look good, if you're from any different country, they still make you feel at home. And that's why this place means a lot to me because they helped me so much in every single way and I'm thankful.